

Staff Spotlight: Todd Losee and Joseph Haas

Todd and Joe both work for the DEQ's Land and Water Management Division. Todd is a Wetland Specialist and Joe is the Inland Lakes and Streams Coordinator. Both of them are well known for their expertise and their commitment to protecting Michigan's water resources, but this commitment goes well beyond the time they put in at the office each week. Recently, for example, the two of them took a day off to drive to Washington D.C. to observe the U.S. Supreme Court hearings on the landmark Rapanos and Carabell Clean Water Act cases.

After nearly 9 hours on the road, Todd and Joe crossed the Potomac River at 3:15am on February 21. As they drove by the Supreme Court, they were surprised and disappointed to see about 35 people already in line. After driving so far, and given that only the first 50 in line are admitted into the Court's gallery, their hearts sank thinking they might not make it in the door.

For the next six hours, as number 40 and 41 in line, Todd and Joe waited in 20 degree weather, though thankfully, being the hardy Michiganders they are, they came prepared. As morning broke, the wait paid off as they were quickly told the rules and ushered into the courtroom.

The two cases, John A. Rapanos v. United States of America, and June Carabell v. United States Army Corps of Engineers, both raise questions regarding the authority of the federal government to regulate the headwaters of traditionally navigable lakes and streams, along with the wetlands connected to those waters. The DEQ has urged recognition of the fact that protection of headwaters and tributaries to large lakes and streams is essential to the protection of the Great Lakes and other interstate waters.

Todd and Joe found the Justices very well prepared and, for the most part, all the questions were fair. There's been a lot of prognostication on how the Court will decide these two cases, but after witnessing the court proceedings first hand, Todd and Joe were both optimistic that the court would uphold the protections of our water resources.

Although they were bleary-eyed on the drive home that same day, the adrenaline from seeing cases they had worked on in their jobs argued in front of the Supreme Court lasted at least until the middle of Ohio. Regardless of how the Supreme Court rules, the road trip these two men took is but one example of the commitment of DEQ staff to our environment—both in and outside of work.

If you want to ask Joe or Todd about their "Supreme" road trip, contact them at loseet@michigan.gov or haasj@michigan.gov

